

A Conversation with Irimi Rockwell
Teacher of Maitri Space Awareness: The Five Wisdom Energies
Karmê Chöling, December 2-8, 2002

Irimi Rockwell, author of *The Five Wisdom Energies, A Buddhist Way of Understanding Personalities, Emotions, and Relationships* spoke to Karmê Chöling about her upcoming program on the wisdom energies. The program introduces each of the energies and explores how they work together to shape personality and relationships. Although these ideas are derived from the Tibetan Buddhism, their use here is secular and accessible to a wide audience.

Participants will experience the Five Wisdom Energies through individual, couple, and group exercises, and will learn how to align with inherent sanity rather than perpetuating confusion in their lives. Each of the energies has the potential to be both sane and neurotic, inspiring and obstructing, open and closed. Below are the five energies and some of their basic positive/negative, or sane/confused characteristics:

Vajra – (Blue) Clarity: wisdom, intellectual brilliance, calm, seeing big picture and details / rigid, opinionated, abstract.

Ratna – (Yellow) Enrichment: equanimity, satisfied, rich, abundance / arrogant, possessive, greedy, suffocating, needy.

Padma – (Red) Passion: intuitive knowing, intimate connections, wholesome, empathetic / obsessive, sentimental, fearful of being hurt.

Karma – (Green) Activity: action, harmony, synchronicity with all activity, efficient, confident / restless, insecure, paranoid, manipulative.

Buddha – (White) Spaciousness: wonder, inquisitive, receptive / indifferent, avoiding, denying.

Irimi Rockwell was a member of the core faculty of Naropa University for ten years. She currently leads Five Wisdoms training programs throughout North America and Europe, and is the director of the Five Wisdom's Institute.

(www.FiveWisdomsInstitute.com).

How can someone benefit from your program on the Five Wisdom energies?

Individuals can gain more of a sense of their own “colorings,” the constantly shifting energies in their personalities. They will also gain an understanding of how they

interact with others, the environments they inhabit, and what they enjoy and struggle with in their lives. We will see that we have all five energies in some combination and discover our own unique mix of colors and those we see in others. In this way we will gain a deeper understanding of ourselves and others.

Which activities and exercises help people gain an understanding of the wisdom energies?

We will explore each color by embodying and creatively expressing its energy through coloring, moving, sounding, and writing poetry. These exercises aren't just for artists – anyone can use them as a vehicle to express what they are feeling. A lot of emotional work can come up through this. We will work in couples and do group work to tune into and communicate through the five energies.

We practice in five different postures to have a direct, immediate sense of the energies. We avoid analyzing and categorizing but instead contemplate the energies, letting understanding arise as insight. The postures work with psychophysical energy patterns so both mind and body are involved. The postures unblock the energy patterns. If our energy is blocked, we manifest neurotically; when our energy is purified, our wisdom shines forth. The same principle applies in such techniques as acupuncture, yoga, and Tai Chi, which all work with energy.

How can someone integrate the Five Wisdom Energies into a contemplative lifestyle?

Once someone has taken a program like this, he or she can find it useful in relationships with a partner or at work. There is insight and understanding about why some relationships can be wonderful and creative, and why others can get stuck; why it is that with some people there is always an energy clash, and why with others there is a sense of ease. Once someone understands the basic principles, they can identify when you they are being closed and when you they are being open and engaged - then you they can learn to become more open. The exercises in the program can create more compassionate and genuine relationships.

People have a tendency to identify themselves with one of the Five Wisdom Energies. You write in your book that this is an illusion, that we actually embody all of the five energies.

In our eagerness to find out and pin down who we are, we solidify. We need to acknowledge our tendency to do that. The point is to contemplate the energies and experience them in the moment. Each moment could be fresh. The point is not to get stuck. In the program, we explore the mix of colors in people. When we go deeper into the mix, the whole thing becomes very provocative.

In working with relationships, how do we know that we aren't projecting a specific energy onto someone else – or that they aren't projecting something onto us? How can we get to the core of understanding another person's interplay of energies?

You need to stay in the moment and communicate in a heartfelt way. For instance, you may think of someone as green, but then that person may have a red moment. If you only relate to them as one energy, you miss their other colors. The goal is to embody all five wisdom and become rainbow. Then you can bring out the rainbow in someone else.

You explain that each of the energies has a sane quality and a neurotic quality. How should individuals deal with the neurotic aspects? Is the goal to attempt to fix them, to understand them, or even "befriend our stuck places" as you have suggested in your book?

What is innovative about this approach is the attitude towards neurosis. Instead of trying to get rid of our intensified emotions, which is what we habitually want to do, the suggestion is to invite the energy and stay with it. Trying to get rid of neurotic energy misses the point. Instead we could discover a more genuine aspect of our energy, feeling a sense of relaxation, warmth and openness towards it. It also helps to become aware of the triggers that send us into a confused state.

Maitri, a Sanskrit word meaning loving kindness, brings home the point that we are okay just the way we are. We can realize that the energy is inside of us and that it's okay. For instance, being clear is associated with the blue energy. However, it can turn into "I'm right." Anger surfaces when we insist on being right and force our clarity on others. We think the solution is to get rid of the neurotic side of the energy. However, by making friends with our neurosis, we see that our neurosis and sanity are opposite sides of the same coin. We can stay with the anger, we can see the clarity in it. Seeing the wisdom in the darkness of confusion is the point.

Explain your history with Karmê Chöling. Does Karmê Chöling itself have a dominant energy?

I lived there for four years and worked as head of practice and study. It was a wonderful period. My husband was co-director of Karmê Chöling, and my daughter was there from ages six to ten. At that time, there were 50 people all living and working under the same roof. It was very easy to see people's many colorings – the "in between" stages when they weren't "on" and then again when they were in a specific role.

Overall, Karmê Chöling embodies all of the colors. Padma energy is seen in how people communicate and relate. Vajra energy is in the clarity of the teachings as well as in a sense of decorum. For those who live and work at Karmê Chöling, green energy is very present in making many programs happen. Yellow can be seen in the rich environment and the shrine room, and white is there because Karmê Chöling is a place of contemplation.

Why do you feel that this is a good place for people to learn about the Wisdom Energies?

It's a beautifully contained and protected environment for participants. The center itself is set up to house a program like this with friendliness. We will be creating a community in the week we will be together. Because people will be staying at Karmê Chöling, it helps us build a stronger community and a deeper program.

Any last comments?

Working with the Five Wisdom Energies is very transforming work. There can be breakthroughs when people are stuck within themselves self or in relationships with others. It is a gift to one's self to do it.